

PRESS RELEASE

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Japan's refusal in closing its domestic ivory market to be challenged at the CITES Meeting on 27th November; A comprehensive report criticizing Japan's ivory trade controls released

TOKYO - The Sixty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee (SC) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will be held in Geneva (Switzerland) on 27 November -1 December 2017. "IMPLEMENTING ASPECTS OF RESOLUTION CONF. 10.10 (REV. COP17) ON THE CLOSURE OF DOMESTIC IVORY MARKETS" will be placed on the meeting's agenda.

<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/69/E-SC69-51-02.pdf>

The latest CITES report revealed that in 2016, the overall downward trend of elephant poaching in Africa continues since its peak in 2011, but the level remains still high. At the same time, 2016 records the highest level of seizures of illegally traded ivory by weight.

https://cites.org/eng/news/pr/African_elephant_poaching_down_ivory_seizures_up_and_hit_record_high_24102017

The agenda has been submitted by African countries of Burkina Faso, Congo, Kenya and Niger, which request that the Standing Committee facilitate the implementation of recommendations on the urgent closure of domestic ivory markets taken at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) to CITES.

The Government of Japan, keeping an eye on the discussion of the agenda, submitted a report titled: "Report on Further Actions Taken by Japan to Combat Illegal Trade in Ivory" to the CITES Secretariat and demonstrated an improvement of its internal ivory trade controls by an amendment to the "Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora" (LCES), activities undertaken by the "Public-Private Council for the Promotion of Appropriate Ivory Trade Measures", etc..

<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/69/E-SC69-29-03-A-02.pdf>

On the other hand, the document submitted by the African countries for discussion of the agenda explicitly criticizes Japan by name for its response to the recommendation on closure of domestic ivory market as follows while it praises the sure and steady efforts by China, the US, EU, etc. for implementing the recommendation.

"Japan has a significant ivory market but has argued that its domestic market does not contain illegal ivory and that the recent CITES recommendation on closure of domestic markets does not apply." However, "in light of these on-going concerns about Japan's domestic market despite amendments to its wildlife trade regulations..."

Furthermore, the African proponents requested the Standing Committee to reconsider its previous decision that Japan should not be requested to prepare a National Ivory Action Plan which is a mechanism for assessing the implementation of Resolution Conf.10.10.

The coming SC meeting is the first opportunity for Japan to clarify its position as "Japan's domestic ivory market is not the subject of the resolution on closure of domestic ivory markets" at a CITES-related formal occasion. Japan should stand out from the CITES Parties by the singular

position and is likely to be criticized by them for the stand turning its back to the implementation of the resolution.

Tokyo-based Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund published today a report titled: **“Why Should the Japanese Domestic Ivory Market Be Closed? -How ivory traders are capitalising on the failures in policy and governance, and corruption within institutions-”** (194 pages total).

This report illustrates all aspects of Japan’s ivory trade through all information about the market available and comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of Japan’s ivory trade controls. It is comprised of 8 chapters as follows;

- Chapter 1: Application of the CITES Resolution on closure of domestic ivory market to Japan
- Chapter 2: Online Trade of Ivory in Japan
- Chapter 3: Import/export of ivory between Japan and the other countries including China, and regulation on Import/export in Japan
- Chapter 4: The reality of internal trade in Japan’s domestic ivory market, and the regulation over it / the registration scheme
- Chapter 5: The supervisory scheme over the business and the products certification scheme, for internal trade control on ivory cut pieces and ivory products
- Chapter 6: Japan’s compliance with the mandate on taking measures for internal trade controls urged by CITES Resolution Conf. 10.10
- Chapter 7: Perspective of tightening controls of ivory trade by Government of Japan in the wake of the CITES resolution on closure of domestic ivory market
- Chapter 8: Final discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

Masayuki Sakamoto, Executive Director of JTEF concluded,

“Although illegal internal trade, import and export have continued, and the illegal internal trade has significantly increased in particular, the Government of Japan is determined in opposition to follow the resolution of closure of domestic ivory trade, and far from it, is avoiding closing the serious loopholes in its controls on ivory trade and is consistently vitalizing ivory supply into the market and demand for ivory.

In these situations, it is gravely concerned that traffickers would launder illegally-traded ivory through the market of legally-traded ivory.

There is no question that Japan’s domestic ivory market should be urgently closed down in accordance with CITES Resolution 10.10 (Rev. CoP17).”

END